

Brexit and its psychological impact: A qualitative study on the
well-being of EU-citizens based in the UK

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Abstract

Research on the relationship between well-being and environmental factors demonstrated that adverse living conditions and extreme life events can have temporary or longer lasting effects on the well-being of individuals, depending on the severity of the event and the resilience of those affected. This qualitative study aimed to investigate how Brexit impacted the well-being of EU-citizens living in the UK. By applying thematic analysis, 43 testimonies of individuals who shared their personal Brexit story, were analysed, revealing three main themes: 'living with uncertainty', 'experiencing discrimination' and 'identity questioned'. Discussing these themes in light of previous research, this study suggests Brexit affected contributor's subjective, psychological and social well-being negatively and was potentially traumatising for individuals of vulnerable groups. Although the majority of EU-citizens are likely to recover to their former level of well-being after Brexit, further studies on this population are needed to investigate how many EU-citizens are in need of professional help to overcome the psychological impact Brexit had on their lives. "Brexit means Brexit" for Theresa May but what it means for EU-citizens living in the UK seems to be defined by their current living situation and their resilience.

1. Introduction

1.1. Brexit

On Thursday 23rd June 2016, British citizens voted in a referendum to decide whether the United Kingdom (UK) should leave or remain in the European Union (EU) (Foster, 2017). Since 51.9 % of the votes were in favour of a British exit out of the EU (Brexit), Theresa May triggered Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty on 29th March 2017, giving both the UK and EU two years to negotiate this separation (Hunt & Wheeler, 2018). The result of the referendum caused uncertainty in many areas of British life, as consequences were difficult to predict due to the unique situation in the history of the European Union. Regardless of whether Britain leaves the EU or not, the UK will have experienced a great deal of uncertainty for nearly three years. The media frequently reports about the uncertainty and the consequences of this on the British economy. An issue often neglected, however, is the case of the 3.2 million EU citizens living in the UK who are dealing with ambiguity concerning their future rights since the result of the referendum was announced (Bueltmann, 2018).

Living with an unknown entity for a long period of time and experiencing an anti-European atmosphere is likely to impact the well-being of those Europeans who are affected by Brexit. With the aim of this study being to analyse in which ways, and to what extent, Brexit affected the well-being of this population, the term well-being will be defined in the following section.

1.2. Well-being

Previous research has established that well-being is more than just the absence of ill-being and should be understood as a complex construct indicating levels of optimal experience, functioning and social integration (Keyes, 2006; Ryff et al., 2006). Subjective well-being captures the personal experience of one's happiness and can be divided into the dimensions of positive affect, negative affect and life satisfaction (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). Positive and negative affect can be

understood as the emotional reaction to pleasant and unpleasant situations: with joy, contentment, pride and ecstasy on the one end, and shame, sadness, anxiety, anger, stress and depression on the other end of the spectrum (Diener et al., 1999). Although positive affect and negative affect are not completely independent from each other (e.g. in term of frequency) they are nevertheless understood as distinct dimensions of well-being that should both be considered when investigating the subjective well-being of individuals (Diener, Larsen, Levine & Emmons, 1985; Diener et al., 1999). Moreover, it should be noted that life events are perceived differently by different individuals and possibly even by the same individual at different moments in time (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 1999). Furthermore, subjective well-being is more than an affective reaction to changing circumstances. It is also based on cognitive judgments, which has been labelled life satisfaction (Singh & Jha, 2008). Life satisfaction has been found to correlate with self-esteem, stable relationships and financial security, however, there are considerable cultural differences especially between individualistic and collectivistic societies (Diener & Diener, 1995; Kwan, Bond, Singelis, 1997). It is important to note, that just as the same life event is perceived differently by different people, judgments on life satisfaction also depends on individual expectations, experiences, goals, temperament, culture and values and is therefore subjective (Diener et al., 1999). Peterson, Park and Seligman (2005) stressed that life satisfaction is not only based on hedonic well-being but also on engagement and meaning. Research on well-being has traditionally been divided into the fields of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, with the latter focussing on psychological functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Ryff (1989) defined six dimensions of psychological well-being and labelled them as: self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relations, purpose in life, personal growth and autonomy. According to researchers of the eudaimonic tradition, well-being is facilitated through living one's life to the full potential by being able to grow continuously, feeling part of meaningful groups, sensing a purpose in life, managing challenges and remaining autonomous (Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Disabato, Goodman, Kashdan, Short and Jarden

(2016) suggested that well-being should be understood as one overarching construct combining hedonic and eudaimonic well-being as those dimensions are empirically very similar. Following this line of thought, well-being is based on subjective well-being as well as psychological functioning. Keyes (1998) further expanded the understanding of well-being by focussing on the public dimension of life. According to Keyes (1998), individuals are constantly interacting with others and well-being is therefore likely to be influenced to a significant degree by five factors: social integration, social acceptance, social contribution, social coherence and social actualisation. In addition to experiencing positive life events and living up to one's own potential, being successfully integrated into a community is also important for levels of well-being (Keyes, 2006). Research on the role of social integration (see 1.2.2.3 Well-being and social integration) supports this argument.

Taking the findings of different research traditions on well-being into account, well-being was understood in this study as a multi-dimensional construct including subjective well-being, psychological functioning and social well-being. Before directly exploring how Brexit has psychologically impacted the well-being of EU citizens living in the UK, the current state of research on well-being will be outlined in terms of three aspects. Firstly, it will be discussed under which conditions negative life events have a short-term or long-term effect on well-being. Secondly, relevant influential variables, e.g. experiencing uncertainty or discrimination, will be evaluated in terms of their potential impact on well-being. Finally, factors that increase resilience in the face of challenging events, will be considered for an explanation of individual differences regarding the reaction to negative events.

1.2.1 Well-being and negative life events

Research findings on the link between well-being and negative life events provide the basis for an evaluation into the extent of which Brexit may have affected the well-being of EU-citizens who are based in the UK. Early research on well-being found firstly

demographic factors such as age, income and education only affect well-being to a small degree (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Diener et al., 1999) and secondly, that the level of well-being tended to be relatively stable over time (Suh, Diener & Fujita, 1996). Based on these findings, it seemed questionable whether negative life events (such as Brexit) could have a significant and long-lasting effect on one's well-being. Testing this question, Suh et al. (1996) provided evidence that experiencing positive and negative life events only affected well-being for a limited amount of time of up to three months. This, along with similar findings, supported the idea of the treadmill theory of happiness, originally introduced by Brickman and Campbell in the 1970s, and further refined by Diener, Lucas and Scollon (2006), which assumes that individuals have a baseline of happiness which they return to via adaptation, after having temporary reactions to good and bad life events. Supporting the idea of a stable set point for happiness, Brickman, Coates and Janoff-Bulman (1978) provided evidence on how little extreme positive events, for example winning the lottery, impacted the well-being of participants in the long term. They also demonstrated, however, that in the case of extreme negative experiences (e.g. becoming paraplegic), life events could have lasting negative effects on participants' subjective well-being. Lucas, Clark, Georgellis and Diener (2003, 2004) strengthened this line of thought by showing that widows often demonstrated reduced life satisfaction even eight years later and that the experience of unemployment could alter one's level of life satisfaction permanently. Additionally, research has shown that experiencing high amounts of stress due to negative life events correlates with the onset of physical and mental illnesses in some individuals (Rabkin & Struening, 1976). Thus, some negative life events which cause significant change seem to have the potential to impact well-being for a long period of time or even permanently, and may increase the likelihood for illnesses. This is especially the case for traumatic life events, those that are usually not encountered in everyday life and which are perceived as overwhelming (Boals, Riggs & Kraha, 2013; Doepel, 1991). Taking these findings into consideration, Diener et al. (2006) suggested that adaptation to changing circumstances, which

reduces the impact of positive and negative experiences, depends on the type of event that one encounters.

Although previous research indicated that the type and severity of an event is an important factor in relation to the impact it has on well-being, the same event usually affects individuals to a varying degree due to individual differences regarding the perception and reaction to those events (Suh, et al., 1996) (see 1.2.3 Well-being and resilience). Besides the availability and use of more or less adaptive coping strategies, the perception and evaluation of the severity of an event is decisive for its impact on well-being (Garnefski, Kraaij & Spinhoven, 2001; Rabkin & Stuenkel, 1976). Judging a negative life event as highly important and unmanageable or as less important and controllable will increase or reduce the negative impact on well-being. Emotional sensitivity, which is likely to affect this evaluation, can be caused by previous negative experiences or stress through chronic illnesses (Billings & Moos, 1981). Another mediating factor influencing the impact of life events is the quality of one's social networks that buffer stress and provide support (Cohen, 2004). The effect of social support on the well-being will be further discussed at a later stage (see 1.2.1.1 Well-being and social integration).

Taken together, previous research suggested that individuals adjust to most negative life events over time. Extreme negative life events on the other hand can lead to long term changes in well-being, however individual differences in the perception of those events, in coping and in terms of perceived social support mediate the impact significantly. Thus, it is necessary to evaluate whether Brexit can be considered as an extreme negative or even a traumatic life event, and ultimately whether some individuals were more affected than others.

1.2.2 Well-being and relevant mediating factors

With the aim of this study to find out how the situation caused by the Brexit referendum impacted the well-being of EU-citizens, the effects of uncertainty, discrimination and social integration on well-being will be outlined in the following.

1.2.2.1 Well-being and experiencing uncertainty.

Uncertainty has been found to affect well-being in several ways. Research on immigrants and refugees has shown that longer periods of living with uncertainty and not knowing whether they will be allowed to stay in the new country permanently, impacted their subjective well-being and psychological functioning (Li, Liddell & Nickerson, 2016). An Australian study by Momartin and colleagues (2006) showed that individuals, who held temporary protection visas, and therefore had to live with uncertainty for a longer period of time, scored higher on tests for anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder than comparable individuals with permanent visas. Steel et al. (2011) suggested that the well-being of those individuals living with uncertainty about their legal status was negatively affected by an ongoing exposure to a variety of post-migration living difficulties. This seems reasonable as a study with asylum seekers in the Netherlands also indicated that several living difficulties, such as family issues and discrimination compounded the difficulties of those living in uncertainty about their right of residence (Laban, Gernaat, Komproe, von der Twell & De Jong, 2005). It is questionable, however, whether post-migration stressors, for example a loss of social identity, discrimination and social isolation are the cause of a reduced well-being in many immigrants or whether the experience of uncertainty during the process of gaining citizenship or permanent residency weakens individuals in a way that those stressors can have a damaging effect on well-being (Li et al., 2016). Further studies using longitudinal data will have to clarify the link between uncertainty and post-migration living difficulties. In addition to the struggles immigrants encounter post migration, the well-being of those living with uncertainty about gaining permanent protection is likely to be influenced by the feeling of

not having control over one's life (Mansouri & Cauchi, 2006; McCormick, 2002). Research on the mental health of undocumented young immigrants in the USA also indicated that uncertainty about belonging and protection in the future negatively impacts their sense of self-efficacy and provokes questions about their purpose in life (Gonzales, Suárez-Orozco & Dedios-Sanguinetti, 2013). Moreover, uncertainty about the right to stay in a country impedes the process of adaptation, which is generally believed to reduce the impact of negative life events on well-being (Mansouri & Cauchi, 2006). As soon as new circumstances arise, individuals are able to adapt to them, however, as long as they are living in limbo and future circumstances are not defined, opportunities for adaptation are limited (Frederick & Löwenstein, 1999). Finally, the process of applying for permanent residency (PR) or citizenship, which generally takes up a long period of time, is often accompanied with many setbacks and difficulties that intensify the uncertainty for applicants (Laban, Gernaat, Komproe, Schreuders & De Jong, 2004; Li, et al., 2016).

In short, living with uncertainty is likely to negatively impact well-being by increasing stress as well as symptoms of anxiety and depression, either directly through reducing feelings of autonomy and personal mastery, or indirectly through the occurrences of a range of living difficulties resulting from the situation. Thus, the uncertainty caused by the Brexit debate is likely to have a negative effect on the well-being of EU-citizens based in the UK.

1.2.2.2 Well-being and discrimination.

Research on minority groups has established that discrimination is linked to stress, reduced well-being and anxiety (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008). Moreover, a strong positive relationship was found between discrimination and depression (Ellis, MacDonald, Lincoln & Cabral, 2008; Priest, et. al, 2013). Besides impacting subjective well-being, Harrell (2000) highlighted that discrimination also impacts social well-being as it leads to distrust and influences social relationships within a community.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect, targeting individuals or groups and can take place on a personal or institutional level (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008; Harrell, 2000). Different groups tend to encounter different types of discrimination due to personal characteristics, e.g. skin colour and accent, as well as due to existing prejudice in societies regarding certain groups (Hadley & Patil, 2009). Not only the type but also the quantity varies, as visual minority groups have been found to experience more direct and personal discrimination than those who can only be identified as foreigners by their accents (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008; Hadley & Patil, 2009). Additionally, the likelihood of encountering direct discrimination also depends on one's location. In a study of minority groups in the USA, those living in big cities were targeted much less with discriminating comments than those living in rural areas (Ryff, Keyes & Hughes, 2003). Therefore, personal and environmental factors influence the level and type of discrimination one encounters (Harrell, 2000). Thus, those living in rural areas, who can be identified as migrants by visual characteristics and belong to minority groups of low reputation in the society, seem to be affected most by discrimination and its negative effects on well-being, however some moderating factors undermine this conclusion. A study on the link between well-being and discrimination in refugees of three cultural backgrounds provided evidence that the negative association of discrimination and well-being could be reduced by factors such as perceiving the host country as fair and being able to retain a sense of mastery and control over one's life (Fozdar & Torezani, 2008). Ryff and colleagues (2003) also indicated that belonging to a minority group and encountering challenges due to this status can increase eudaimonic well-being especially for higher educated minority group members. However, for women of these groups who regularly encountered discrimination, this positive effect did not exist and for them discrimination was strongly associated with reduced well-being (Ryff et al., 2003). Considering the findings on discrimination and well-being, experiencing discrimination should cause stress in EU-citizens and is likely to lower their levels of well-being. However, the extent to which this is the case will depend on several mediating factors.

1.2.2.3 Well-being and social integration.

Being part of groups is vital for human beings and according to the social identity theory, identifying oneself with a group enhances one's social identity and increases self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Belonging to a community is an important cornerstone for one's well-being as it not only increases the likelihood for positive social interactions and experiences, but also promotes psychological functioning by providing meaning and security (Haslam, Jetten, Postmes & Haslam, 2009). Social integration is linked to well-being in several ways: being socially integrated and perceiving the possibility of receiving social support facilitates well-being, whereas encountering negative social interactions, feeling isolated or getting excluded from a group is negatively associated with well-being (Cohen, 2004; Cruwys, Haslam, Dingle, Haslam & Jetten, 2014). Previous research on social integration and well-being stressed the importance of social support. It was found to be a significant predictor for happiness and can be distinguished in emotional, informational and instrumental support (Cohen, 2004; Lu, 1999). Moreover in times of distress, the availability of social support has been found to function as a stress buffer (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Cohen (2004) suggested two pathways for this: Firstly, knowing that support would be available makes the event seem less overwhelming and secondly, relevant others can provide solutions to problems or suggest additional coping options (Cohen, 2004). Studies investigating the link between social support and well-being indicated, however, that the perception of available support is more beneficial for well-being as receiving support often comes with the price of feeling incompetent of dealing with the situation alone (Bolger, Zuckerman & Kessler 2000; Wethington & Kessler, 1986). Perceiving that support would be available or receiving invisible support from others, however, comes without this cost and thus has a positive effect on well-being by reducing stress (Bolger & Amarel, 2007). In general, social support can be provided from different sources, such as the wider society, groups one associates with or relevant others, e.g. parents, the partner and friends, usually providing different types of assistance (Lin, Ye & Ensel, 1999). In the case of minority groups (e.g. EU-citizens living

in the UK), social support can be provided or refused to be provided by the in-group or in terms of intragroup support by the wider society (Harrell, 2000). Whilst the availability of social support is crucial in times of stress, social integration affects well-being independently of challenging life events (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Belonging to a group can provide meaning, enhance self-worth and strengthen one's identity and in doing so promoting a positive mental state (Cohen, 2004). In line with that, mattering to other people has been found to be negatively associated with depressive symptoms and Taylor and Turner (2001) provided evidence that this link is especially true for women.

Social isolation, which either originates in unfortunate circumstances (e.g. in the case of elderly people living in rural areas) or is chosen to avoid further harm after experiencing a negative life event, has been found to be associated with poorer sleep as well as reduced mental and physical health (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2014; Courtin & Knapp, 2017). Even more harmful for one's well-being than being socially isolated, is the experience of being excluded from a relevant group through social rejection or ostracism (Riva & Eck, 2016). According to the exclusion theory of anxiety, individuals constantly fear being excluded and invest a lot of energy to prevent this from happening (Baumeister & Tice, 1990). Whilst social integration in a society or group predominantly affects well-being in a positive way, social exclusion is associated with reduced self-esteem as well as with questions about meaningfulness and self-worth (Bastian & Haslam, 2010; Stillman et al., 2009). Additionally, social exclusion has been found to be important for the onset and maintenance of several mental disorders, including anxiety disorders and depression, especially when individuals encounter social exclusion in combination with other life stressors (Fung, Xu, Glazier, Parsons & Alden, 2016; Targosz et al., 2003). Possible reactions to the experience of social exclusion can be prosocial, antisocial or socially avoidant, depending on different mediating factors such as the severity and duration of the exclusion experience, the chances to reintegrate and the value of relationships (Bernstein, 2016; Richman & Leary, 2009). Experiencing discrimination or becoming dehumanised, which is often experienced by members of

minority groups, is also likely to produce feelings of isolation from the wider society and therefore increases social exclusion (Bernstein, 2016).

Overall, feeling socially integrated and having a reliable social network that could provide support if necessary is positively linked to subjective and social well-being as well as to psychological functioning. On the contrary, lacking social support or perceiving threats to belonging to a community causes stress and can negatively affect well-being and health if experienced for a longer period of time. Thus, it is important to evaluate how the Brexit debate impacted the social integration of EU-citizens in British society.

1.2.3 Well-being and resilience

Since negative life events and adverse living conditions seem to affect the well-being of individuals to different degrees, resilience factors should be considered when investigating how Brexit could have affected levels of well-being. Resilience allows individuals to maintain positive well-being in times of difficult life events (Bonanno, 2004). Previous research identified several factors that function as protectors, and which help to explain why certain individuals are less affected by negative life events than others (Ryff, et al., 2003). Possessing certain personality traits has been suggested to provide resilience in times of adversity, as traits are believed to influence psychological and social adjustment (Costa & McCrae, 1980). Scoring low regarding neuroticism and high in terms of extraversion on personality tests has been found, for instance, to be associated with less extreme reactions to conflicts and higher levels of well-being (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995; Costa & McCrae, 1980). Further studies on the link between personality characteristics and resilience provided insights in the mechanism through which certain traits influenced resilience.

The use of certain coping strategies does not only depend on previous life experiences and knowledge of those strategies, but is also influenced by personality factors (Diener, et al. 2006). Several studies showed that individuals who scored high regarding neuroticism on personality tests used less adaptive coping strategies (like

escape-avoidance methods, confrontive coping and denial) than those low in neuroticism (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995; Ferguson, 2001). With regards to traumatic life events, effective coping has been found to facilitate adaptation and to reduce the negative psychological impact of adverse life events on individuals (Fahrudin, 2012). Investigating the link between negative life events and well-being, Garnefski et al. (2001) found that those participants who tended to use less adaptive coping strategies to reduce the impact of an event, like self-blame, rumination and catastrophising, showed more symptoms of depression and anxiety than those who used more adaptive strategies. A study on racial discrimination of refugees in Canada demonstrated, however, that the question whether a coping strategy is adaptive or not also depends on cultural norms and cannot be generalised without taking the cultural background into consideration (Noh, Beiser, Kaspar, Hou & Rummens, 1999). In addition to the usefulness of coping strategy, a study by Galatzer-Levy, Burton and Bonanno (2012) provided evidence that the ability to switch flexibly between those strategies was also linked to increased well-being.

Personality traits furthermore influence resilience indirectly through affecting the availability of a social network and the readiness to connect to other people in difficult times. Ferguson (2001) for instance found that scoring high on extraversion is associated with seeking support by others. Being socially integrated and having a reliable social network is another vital resilience factor for well-being due to the perception of available social support acts as a stress buffer in times of negative life events (Billings & Moos, 1981; Cohen & Wills, 1985). Whether one experiences social integration or isolation not only depends on the quantity of contacts, but more importantly on the quality of those relationships (Bernstein, 2016). The quality and diversity of one's social network is likely to be influenced by sex, location and education level (McPherson, Smith-Lovin & Brashears, 2006).

The level of education is also important with regards to the interpretation of a challenging situation, as higher levels of education were found to link to higher levels of

eudaimonic well-being in members of minority groups that encounter discrimination (Ryff, et al., 2003). Rather than perceiving discrimination as an unfair insult, higher educated individuals perceiving those situations more often as a manageable challenge and the coping with it as something that strengthens their purpose in life. In line with that, certain attributional styles have been found to be more favourable than others (Harrell, 2000). For instance, individuals who can maintain hope, do not victimise themselves and are able to set new goals are also better protected against the impact of negative life events (Brunstein, Schultheiss & Grässmann, 1998; Fozdar & Torezani, 2008; Gonzales et al., 2013).

In summary, resilience factors help to explain why some individuals are able to maintain high levels of well-being in the face of negative and even traumatic life events. On the other hand, those lacking these resilience factors are at risk of being affected by those events more severely. Umberson and Montez (2017) pointed to the fact that there are populations, e.g. poor, unhealthy and old people as well as those caring for others, which are more at risk to be affected by negative life events and are in need of extra support to overcome difficult times.

1.3 Structure and aim of the study

Due to Brexit having caused a unique situation for EU-citizens living in the UK, which is not comparable with individuals living in uncertainty due to war or because they choose to move to a new country, little is known about the psychological impact of such a situation on individuals. Gaining a better understanding of how the well-being of EU-citizens is affected by the situation is important in order to provide adequate help and to prevent causing harm in a similar situation in the future. This study therefore aims to answer the question: How has Brexit psychologically impacted the well-being of EU-citizens living in the UK? In order to do this, a number of samples of testimonies from the book *In Limbo: Brexit testimonies from EU citizens in the UK* (Remigi, Martin & Sykes, 2017) will be analysed. After explaining the methodological choices and procedure as well as presenting found themes in the data source, the research question will be

addressed in answering the following three sub-questions: 1.) What were the effects of Brexit on the well-being of EU-citizens living in the UK? 2.) Who were most affected by the situation? 3.) Will the effects on individuals' well-being be long lasting?.

2. Method

2.1 Materials

The testimonies analysed throughout this study, were taken from the book 'In Limbo: Brexit testimonies from EU citizens in the UK' (Remigi, et al., 2017) (further referred to as 'In Limbo'). This book contains 130 personal accounts of EU-citizens and a few UK-citizens who were affected by the result of the referendum and who shared their experience and views on Brexit. The editors structured the testimonies into five parts, representing five emotions: sadness, disappointment, worry, anger and feelings of betrayal. In order to encompass this range of emotional reactions of contributors to the Brexit situation within the sample, testimonies were chosen from all five parts. Additionally, another criterion used for a representative picture of the experience of EU-citizens within the sample, was to select testimonies of contributors of different European nationalities. Although all EU-citizens encountered a similar situation in the UK due to the result of the referendum, it is likely that the experience will be different if one originates from a country with a strong or weak economy (Eastern vs. Western Europeans) and whether their foreign origin can be detected by visual characteristics (Southern vs. Northern Europeans). Using these two criteria and aiming to capture the variety of experiences of affected EU-citizens in the UK, 43 testimonies were chosen from the total of 130 included in the book. The contributors of the chosen sample originated from 14 European countries, including the UK.

2.2 Method of analysis

The qualitative method of thematic analysis was used in order to explore the experience of EU-citizens living in the UK during the Brexit-negotiations by identifying relevant themes in chosen testimonies. This method enables researchers to recognise patterns of meaning across a data source and to use emerging themes to guide the analysis of the content (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It therefore allows a systematic study of how a political phenomenon like Brexit is experienced by a particular group of the population. Since the method provides a systematic framework for exploration into the subjective experience of an event and its impact on individuals, Braun and Clarke (2014) recommended the use of this method especially for health and well-being research. Furthermore, this method was chosen based on its flexibility, e.g. regarding research questions, sample size and choice of data source, and the fact that it allows a low level of interpretation (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). Due to the transparent and simple structure and the existence of step-to-step-guides, thematic analysis is often described as a relatively easy method, suitable especially for researchers with little experience in qualitative studies (Braun & Clarke, 2014; Vaismoradi et. al, 2013). The listed advantages of the method, however, have been criticised by others. For instance, the flexibility can also be seen as disadvantage as it provides little guidance, requests the researcher to define a theoretical framework of the study, and can lead to superficial and inconsistent findings, particularly if the researcher is inexperienced with this type of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2014, Holloway & Todre, 2003, Willig, 2013). Considering these limitations, it can be seen as an advantage that the researcher of this study has previous experience with the method.

Due to the psychological impact of Brexit on EU-citizens has not been previously studied, an inductive approach was applied (Clarke & Braun, 2017). By using an inductive qualitative approach, it was aimed to capture an in-depth understanding of the variety of experiences, which varied between individuals and over time. To ensure that the themes emerged from the data source and were not influenced by the researcher's

knowledge about the topic, relevant literature was consulted only after the analysis of the data was completed (Willig, 2013).

2.3 Procedure

In order to select a sample of testimonies that represented the large variety of experiences of contributors to the book 'In Limbo' (Remigi, et al., 2017), the procedure of thematic analysis was undergone twice: once with all 130 testimonies to choose a representative sample of texts and the second time with the chosen sample of testimonies. In both cases, the six-step procedure described by Braun and Clarke (2006) was followed. The time-consuming procedure of analysing all testimonies in the book before exploring the content of the sample was undertaken due to any analysis being limited by the quality of the data (Vaismoradi et al. 2013). Thus, a less systematic approach to choose the sample may have limited the validity of the findings of this study.

With the aim of familiarisation with the content of the data source, all 130 testimonies of the book 'In Limbo' (Remigi, et al., 2017) were read twice. Whilst reading through all testimonies for the third time, a list of key topics found in the personal accounts, which seemed potentially relevant regarding the research question, was created as advised by Willig (2013). After refining this list, these key topics were then used as predefined codes to enhance the next step of generating first order codes. King (2004) suggested this procedure when dealing with large data sets. This resulted in a long list of codes, which were clustered by creating second order codes and critically checked regarding their relevance in relation to the research question. During this process, the original data source was constantly revisited. Patterns across the codes were recognised and led to the creation of three distinct themes with a number of sub-themes. During the following step, the themes were reviewed by consulting the original quotes and further defined. Following a suggestion of King (2004), potential names for themes and subthemes were presented to fellow students and their suitability was discussed to choose most informative labels. Eventually, 43 testimonies were chosen

which firstly, represented the variety of experiences within each theme, secondly derived from all five parts of the book and thirdly, were shared by contributors who originated from different parts of Europe (see Appendix A). These 43 testimonies of the sample were analysed again using the six-step procedure (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As expected the same three themes emerged, however refining took place on the level of sub-themes. A final coding frame of the sample with three main themes and eleven sub-themes was created (see section 3. Results).

2.4 Personal reflexivity

Since the process of choosing and analysing testimonies is likely to be influenced by the researcher's background and own experiences with the topic, it should be mentioned that the researcher is an EU-citizen from Germany, who lived in the UK during the time this study was conducted. Having lived and studied in England in 2007/08 as well as in 2017/18, she has experienced the atmosphere before and after Brexit, witnessed that many British citizens were less welcoming during her second stay but did not encounter any discrimination. The personal experience of a changed atmosphere towards non-British citizens may have increased her ability to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of EU-citizens, who contributed to the book 'In Limbo' (Remigi, et al., 2017; Willig, 2013). However, the fact that she organised her move to the UK after knowing the result of the referendum, and did not intend to stay past 2018, she was afforded with the necessary distance from the topic and from the experience of the contributors.

2.5 Ethical considerations

All contributors to the book 'In Limbo' gave full consent for publication (Remigi, et al., 2017). Some provided their names or initials, stated their country of origin and a few decided to stay anonymous. In this study no names or initials were used, however, all quotations from the book are referenced by page number. Since the data source is

publicly available, the context of the used quotations can be found in the book. With the use of the list of chosen testimonies (see Appendix A) the sample of text used in this study can be identified.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology of the University of Chester (see Appendix B). Moreover, the design of the study was guided by the ethical code of conduct of the British Psychological Society (The British Psychological Society, 2009).

3. Results

One contributor to the book 'In Limbo' (Remigi, et al., 2017) stated: "For me one of the worst things is the psychological impact Brexit is having" (T31, p. 168). The aim of this section is to systematically reveal the ways in which the referendum and its consequences impacted the contributors of the sample psychologically and how this affected their well-being. With the focus on the research question 'How has Brexit psychologically impacted the well-being of EU-citizens living in the UK?', three main themes were identified in the book 'In Limbo' (Remigi, et al., 2017) and particularly within the sample of chosen testimonies. The themes 'Living with uncertainty', 'Experiencing discrimination' and 'Identity questioned' are further defined by several subthemes, which are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: *Themes and subthemes found in the sample*

Themes	Subthemes
Living with uncertainty	Being in limbo
	Inability to plan
	Fear about the future
	Having no voice
Experiencing discrimination	Facing unnecessary obstacles
	Experiencing xenophobic insults
Identity questioned	Loss of home
	National identity questioned
	Feeling dehumanised
	Feeling unwanted
	Questioning relationships

In the following, relevant quotes from the chosen testimonies were used to explain and support the three main themes and their subthemes, as well as to demonstrate the variation within them. The effects on the well-being of the contributors are outlined in the end of the three sections. An interpretation of the results can be found in the discussion section (see 4. Discussion). Although deviating from APA regulations, all quotes will be indented and highlighted by quotation marks in order to facilitate the readability of the result section.

3.1 Living with uncertainty

Due to the result of the referendum and the fact that the rights of EU citizens living in the UK are part of the ongoing Brexit negotiations, those affected must live in limbo for a long period of time. The experience of living with uncertainty was one of the 3 themes in the testimonies of the sample. Many of the contributors described how the uncertainty impacted their health (especially their mental health), inhibited any planning,

brought up fears about the future and made them feel powerless and ignored because of not having a voice in the matter.

3.1.1 Being in limbo

Living with uncertainty is a great source for stress and this state affected the authors of the testimonies for a long period of time which reduced their well-being significantly and partly impacted their mental health. Living with the uncertainty does not seem to become easier with time, but rather seems to increase its negative effect as time passes, which can be seen in these examples:

“Today I am feeling numb and a tad depressed. I have been floating in and out of this for nine months now and am finding it harder to cope as time passes. I had somehow hoped that triggering Article 50 today would have taken the mounting pressure off my system, but it isn’t happening today.... I am uncertain about my future,...” (T5, p. 25-26)

“How do I feel today? Well, having gone through the ‘cycle of grief’ like many other EU citizens, I feel I am slowly reaching the bargaining stage I have spent days and sometimes weeks in a state of anger, then denial and throughout winter was most definitely going through a depressed state. I have felt so low that my husband was concerned for my well-being. I have had ‘mysterious ailments’ (none of them serious, but diagnosed as stress-induced. I was told to ‘take it easy’. Easier said than done!).” (T43, p. 223)

Several testimonies displayed that the impact of the uncertainty was especially dramatic for people with pre-existing health issues. Those who tried to recover from poor health or are living with a chronic illness could often not deal with the extra amount of stress caused by this uncertainty. The combination of health issues and stress caused by Brexit was in several cases the determining factor in making the decision to leave the country before the end of the two-year period. The following quotation explains this link:

“For us the best choice was to leave – on top of everything else, the emotional distress from the uncertainty was becoming unbearable and made it difficult to recover from the burnout I was diagnosed with last year as burnout itself is often caused by high levels of uncertainty in your life.” (T36, p. 196)

3.1.2 Inability to plan

Not knowing what will change for EU-citizens living in the UK after the country leaves the EU, makes it very difficult to adapt to the situation and to plan. Additionally, in some cases the options were also limited by financial factors as can be seen in the following statements:

“Until June, we had plans; now everything is on hold. We bought a house earlier this year, which I don’t dare to furnish in case we have to leave. I have stopped unpacking the boxes. My husband needs to start applying for a renewal of the grant that funds his programme of research right now. But should he? Or should he consider a position elsewhere? We don’t know.” (T13, p. 75)

“To settle in England I have made so many sacrifices, and now I am not welcome, I feel I have done all that for nothing, it breaks my heart so much that I have sunk into depression, I sleep with sleeping pills, I’ve become a hermit. I want to return to France but for that too I would need money and I don’t have an income at the moment so I am stuck. I feel like a fly trapped behind a window, I am losing hope and I am sad.” (T9, p. 42)

Experiencing having little control about future developments and depending on future decisions by the government may have a particularly large impact on individuals in transition periods, like young people (Correa-Velez, Gifford & Barnett, 2010). A mother describes what her daughter is going through due to the uncertainty she is faced with:

“Now, as straight A student, her dreams and aspirations of going to university in 2018 are on hold while she and her father are used as bargaining chips. A bright and happy student without a care in the world beyond her studies, she now has panic attacks, nightmares and visions of having to leave all her known family. No indication has been given to the status of students and their fees for 2018. Home fees are bad enough for a working-family with little to spare at the end of the month. International fees would make it impossible. I’m sure she is not alone in this problem but she sure feels like she is right now. We finally decided that she should see a counsellor.” (T34, p.180)

3.1.3 Fear about the future

Not knowing what the consequences for EU-citizens in the UK will be is a breeding ground for many fears about the future. Fears found in the different testimonies ranged from separation from family members to the inability to satisfy essential human needs. In a number of cases, both the parents and children of 'EU-families' own passports of varying countries. Imaging the worst-case scenario that EU-citizens lose the right to stay in the UK, mothers and fathers worried about the separation of family members and the impact of this scenario on their children. Two examples are showing this fear from different perspectives:

"I look at my daughter sleeping and wonder if our family will be split up, how I'd cope with being a Skype mummy, how would we explain it to her." (T13, p.75)

"As I numbly went down the stairs, my ten year old asked me what was wrong and when I told him Britain voted leave, my terrified seven year old asked me if daddy, himself and his brother would be deported. That's a heavy thought for such a small child. What do you say to your seven year old?" (T4, p. 23)

The fear of being deported not only existed in the head of a seven-year-old boy. It was mentioned many times by various contributors of the sample. One testimony showed the extent to which this fear affects the thinking of many EU-citizens:

"Don't underestimate the level of misery and fear Brexit has generated. Some people were actually scared to talk to me when I wrote a piece for The Guardian newspaper for fear that being quoted in this article would mean their names would find their way on to a government list, and they'd be deported. This level of paranoia, whether it is warranted or not, in 21st Century Britain, is deeply shocking." (T15, p. 94)

In addition to the extreme fear of deportation, contributors described the lack of security they felt since the referendum. Fearing a lack of money for a good standard of living, one contributor worried about the possibility that EU-citizens may lose their rights to claim benefits:

"I have received a letter from the Job Centre saying I had lost the right to remain here and they would stop my benefits (sadly I had to claim). I was left destitute as

I had no money at all, because with the low salary, I could not make any savings. I contacted my MP, who wrote a letter to the DWP, and I am now thankfully back in the system, but that was such a fright to know that at any moment I can receive such a letter and that I am now under scrutiny.” (T9, p. 42)

Similarly for older EU-citizens in the UK, the uncertainty about their pensions is a great source of worry. The following quotations illustrate the open questions concerning this matter:

“With Brexit, am I going still receive these pensions if I have to leave the country and, if my husband leaves with me, is he going to receive his pension abroad? He has contributed for over 35 years and he has a part-time job at the moment. It is very worrying to not know how our future will be financially.” (T20, p. 108)

In addition to the fear of having not enough money to pay for housing as well as for food and drinks, the worry of losing access to public health care is another existential fear mentioned in the testimonies as can be seen in this example:

“It really annoys me when people say, “It’s ok, they won’t throw you out.” No, probably not, but what about my health care, my pension, etc, will they be safe? Since I made my decision, and have been looking into it, I have started biting my nails, grinding my teeth, I had a migraine, and generally I have been very anxious and jumpy. Also very emotional.” (T18, p. 103)

The fear not to be able to access public health care is even more daunting for individuals currently suffering from illnesses, like in the case of this contributor:

“Since the Referendum I have been feeling quite destabilised. It has unleashed an existential angst in me. A cancer diagnosis brings a lot of uncertainty about the future. The Referendum brought another layer of uncertainty, especially not knowing if in the future I will still have access to the NHS. ... Losing access to the NHS could mean not being able to afford treatment and bankrupting my family.” (T14, p. 81)

3.1.4 Having no voice

Another aspect that is linked to the uncertainty and was highlighted in the sample of testimonies repeatedly was the fact that EU-citizens although suffering from the

consequences significantly had no vote in the referendum and seem to have no audience when raising their opinion since. The following quotes demonstrate this:

“... I had no voice and felt powerless.” (T25, p.132)

“... to some people, regardless of whether we are British citizens or not, our status as EU nationals renders our opinion on the Brexit debate worthless. You begin to feel that your thoughts on this matter are not as valid as those of others, or, worse that you have no say at all.” (T2, p. 15)

EU-citizens, who contributed to the book ‘In Limbo’ (Remigi, et al., 2017), not only felt ignored by the British citizens who voted for ‘leave’, but were also missing support from the British citizens who voted in line with their interests as this example shows:

“...after the Brexit Referendum, when 48% of you voted to remain, I expected a lot of protest and I of course expected a strong political opposition, both in and out of parliament. After all, half of the population needed to be represented. ... But nothing happened. ...I had no right to vote on this, I had no say in my fate. So I need you, my British friend, to stand up for me.” (T10, p.48-49)

Thus, the powerlessness created by the uncertainty was intensified by EU-citizens having limited opportunities to raise attention for their difficult situation and therefore feeling deserted and ignored by the government and the social community. However, the testimonies also displayed not all EU-citizens accept their powerless position but rather become (politically) active in order to gain control of the situation as these two statements demonstrate:

“I want to be back in control – my world has completely changed over the last few months, I have no idea what my future holds anymore. I’m not going to stop fighting and I want to be heard – I am one of many and I matter. I refuse to feel like a powerless victim – I don’t like it. So I went into work with my new attitude on and to my amazement had a very positive discussion with my colleagues. So yes, my world has changed but I can and will influence my future.” (T16, p. 97)

“A couple of weeks after the Referendum, I realised that in order to survive, apathy just was not an option. I had to act, I had to do something. Shortly after, the 3million group was born and the rest is the 3million’s history.” (T26, p137)

The experiences of the contributors suggested that living with high amounts of stress caused by the uncertainty about future developments, not being able to plan the future and dealing with a variety of existential fears, leaves EU-citizens in a powerless position. This helplessness, together with the existential fears, negatively impacted the well-being of the contributors of the sample as can be seen in the examples given. Whilst some reported symptoms of high level of stress, e.g. grinding teeth, biting nails, being emotional and having migraines, other talked about their inability to sleep, their panic attacks and episodes of depressions. Not having a voice in the matter and feeling let down by the British people made the situation worse for those who felt powerless and only few contributors were able to actively gain back some control.

3.2 Experiencing discrimination

Experiencing discrimination was a second theme in the testimonies of the sample. Contributors described different forms of discrimination ranging from comparatively difficult regulations set by the government over indirect discrimination by anti-immigrant slogans to direct insults or attacks. Most contributors who reported direct insults or attacks originated from southern Europe and were recognised as foreigners by visual characteristics. Others were identified by their accent.

3.2.1 Facing unnecessary obstacles

The process of gaining permanent residency (PR) or applying for citizenship is described by many contributors of the sample as difficult, time consuming, expensive and exhausting. For some it is simply not affordable as the following quote shows:

“I cannot afford the citizenship process, as my pay from the government that issues it is so low that it would cost more than my monthly wage.” (T7, p. 36)

Moreover, the regulations are perceived as being made especially difficult and therefore discriminating EU-citizens on an institutional level. The following quotations demonstrate why the regulations seem bias towards certain groups of applicants:

“I read in horror the stories of stay at home mothers with British children, brilliant scientists and students all not qualified for permanent residency because they cannot prove certain salaries or five consecutive years work here. The process for permanent residency is even more stringent than it was for myself, non-EU citizens only have to prove family income. Therefore, my husband could guarantee for my visa but if I had been an EU citizen, he wouldn’t have had the right. Why would the law be so bias against EU citizens? Surely they are the same as me?” (T4, p.23)

“He spent hours filling the much dreaded 85-page application. Not only is the form long compared to European average of two pages, but requires a myriad of documents. Although our son is at university, we had to provide proof of his child benefit, all my husband’s salary variations, five years of flights in and out of the UK, and many more documents and bills.” (T1, p.10-11)

3.2.2 Experiencing xenophobic insults

Despite the obstacles EU-citizens encounter when applying for PR or citizenship, xenophobic hostility has increased since the referendum and many contributors experienced direct or indirect discrimination in their daily lives (Burnett, 2017). The following quotation is an example for this:

“Long story short, in all my (almost) 50 years in this country, I have never felt as though my family and I belonged anywhere else. ... However, since the Referendum I have been publically insulted three times, spat on once and generally looked down upon. All in my own town. I cannot comprehend where all this hatred has come from and why it’s being allowed to happen. It seems the xenophobia and general ignorance runs deep and has been buried for a long time. Some now think it’s perfectly acceptable to insult those who were once ‘friends’.” (T42, p. 217)

It seems unlikely that the referendum and the Brexit debate caused hatred towards certain minority groups of the British society (Burnett, 2017), but it has most likely fuelled it and as the previous and the following testimony suggest, made it acceptable to discriminate certain groups of people in public:

“Over the course of the last seven years we have been living here, we have seen the national’s bigots, racists and nationalist right wingers become empowered. They now dominate any political discussion, and the Brexit vote has created a toxic atmosphere of spite, hate and dissent. I am disappointed we have been targeted again and again, sometimes by actual thugs and bullies (often online, rarely in real life), more often by the ignorance and lack of education of many people claiming they want to take their country back.” (T12, p. 69)

In addition to being discriminated directly and indirectly with xenophobic slogans and through anti-foreign insults or attacks, EU-citizens also experienced discrimination by being ignored and excluded as described in the following statement:

“...our neighbourly relations have almost vanished and the other neighbours have become virtually invisible (we live in a small street and we know everybody, at least by sight). From that moment, I have begun gradually to feel more and more fragile and at risk of being targeted and ‘to feel a crock pot among iron pots’. I do not talk much, even at the grocery store I speak almost in a whisper. I do not talk on the phone outside the house, so that nobody can pick up my foreign accent and my Italian. ... I often don’t sleep at night, grind my teeth when I sleep and I have also had several crying spells, even at work, where everyone pretended not to notice.” (T21, p.117)

Another aspect that can be drawn from the same testimony is that the interaction with British people not only changed since the referendum, but it also affected the perception of comments that can be interpreted as discriminating as this quotation shows:

“I had hoped that the novelty would pass after a while, but there is always someone who mocks me when I say a word which is not absolutely perfect. If before this was just annoying, now it has become painful.” (T21, p. 118)

Prior to Brexit, the contributor found comments on her accent annoying whereas now these comments hurt her. Therefore, on the one hand this and other testimonies point to an increase in xenophobic insults and attacks; on the other hand it suggests that comments on one’s accent or native country are more easily perceived by EU-citizens as discriminating than have been before the referendum.

Experiencing xenophobic attacks and being excluded by social groups, caused severe stress on the contributors of the testimonies, which can be seen in the described emotional and bodily reactions to the situation. Furthermore, it provoked individuals to change their behaviour, e.g. whispering and not using their native language in public, to hide their foreign origin. Furthermore, the discrimination led to social withdrawal in some cases: either forced by being ignored or chosen as a reaction to negative experiences.

3.3 Identity questioned

In addition to living with high levels of uncertainty and experiencing discrimination, it became apparent in the testimonies that the Brexit situation has brought up many identity-related questions. Contributors felt they lost their homes, were triggered to reconsider which nationality they identify with, felt dehumanised as well as unwanted and questioned relationships. The following quotation captures how much the situation shook the cornerstones of one's identity:

“My struggle with Brexit is both on an identity level and on a relationship level. It has brought up a lot of questions in terms of where home is, if I belong anywhere and whether I want to continue supporting a country that sees me as ‘other’. I suddenly feel that I have to stand in line and prove myself, that I am good enough to be here.” (T29, p. 149)

3.3.1 Loss of home

Although none of the EU-citizens lost their homes literally due to the result of the referendum, home in a more symbolic sense, as part of one's identity and a place of security, felt lost for several contributors, as these examples demonstrate:

“Yesterday I called this country ‘home’. Home is about respect, about belonging, about feeling safe and valued, about being one hundred per cent welcome. But today I don't feel welcome. I've been stabbed in the back, lied to and lied about. Thanks for asking (no one ever asks), but no, I don't feel safe or valued anymore. I won't be able to call this country ‘home’ again.” (T3, p. 17-18)

“I applied for PR before the Referendum, ... After an anxious six month wait (we found out that the Leave won in the meantime) I got the refusal letter, ... I felt

devastated and got a sense of not belonging anywhere, as if I was homeless...”
(T8, p.40)

Not only did many contributors feel as if they lost their home as a consequence of Brexit, but some were also questioning if it ever existed in the way they had perceived and loved it. The following statement sums it up:

“Since the Referendum, I’ve been feeling deeply upset, stressed out, anxious and depressed almost 90% of the time. It seems like the country that I loved so dearly for its tolerance and understanding is no longer here or never really existed!”
(T39, p. 207)

3.3.2 National identity questioned

All EU-citizens in the UK once made the decision to leave their home country and to build up their lives in the UK. Living in a country for a long time, as many contributors have, has had most likely influenced feelings of belonging to the nation of the chosen country, and weakened the ties to their country of origin. The referendum result, in combination with the experienced discrimination provoked many contributors to question their subjectively felt national identity, as evident in the following quotation:

“Nine months on from the Referendum, I am still struggling with overwhelming sadness and anger on a daily basis. ... The Referendum made me feel rejected to the core of my identity. I suddenly realised how European and Dutch and British I felt all at the same time. I felt so disappointed by the vote, and could not help taking it personally. ... I worry that I will never quite be the same person again.” (T33, p. 179-180)

For mixed European families the question of belonging is even more difficult, as this contributor stressed:

“My family is multi-national, a three-passport concoction, a mini-EU. ...English is the lingua franca in our family: we fight in it, swear in it, love in it, dream in it. There is for us no other country where we all belong, in subtly different and yet roughly equivalent ways. I know it because we tried. ... How would you separate the different components of our family...?” (T13, p. 75-76)

Whilst insults like “Go back home!” indicate that EU-citizens have a home outside the UK, it seems less obvious for those who might lose their home in this country. Many contributors to the book “In Limbo” (Remigi, et al., 2017) have spent long period of their lives in the UK, often their entire adult lives. Although they generally have links to their home countries, they do not automatically consider these countries as a second home. The following passage of a testimony demonstrates this:

“I think I have become an anxious person and I was never like this. I get worried easily and we have even started talking about a possible relocation. BUT WHERE TO?” (T21, p. 118)

To secure their right to stay, most contributors considered applying for PR and/or British citizenship. However, the following statements reveal how broken the relationship is to their country of adoption after Brexit and how this impacted their decision to apply for PR, citizenship or to refrain from it.

“I always wanted to become a British citizen, I even wanted to get rid of my Hungarian one, and be proud to be British in my chosen home. But not anymore. Not like this. I won’t be, I can’t be proud. It’s forced on me, because otherwise I’m in an unsafe position. Otherwise I’m just a secondary citizen. Otherwise I’m unwanted and unwelcome. I’ll become British but, in my heart, I won’t be able to feel I’m one of them ever again.” (T35, p. 182-183)

“I felt that I could never apply for British citizenship as I feel thoroughly betrayed by the country.” (T36, p. 196)

Several contributors concluded that they defined themselves primarily as being European, rather than by belonging to a specific European nation. This sense of identification also influenced their decision about applying for citizenship or to leave the country, which can be seen in the following statements:

“Europe is my home. I would never consider taking British citizenship, because it would mean giving up my Austrian citizenship (I’m not feeling particularly patriotic but I would never give up my EU citizenship).” (T24, p. 131)

“...I have never really felt very Irish, just European – that was enough. For me, the EU is more important than individual nations; it is where I find my identity and

culture. After much soul-searching, heartache (and therapy for me!), we have decided to leave Britain and our lovely network of friends and neighbours, taking our kids out of their schools and head west to Ireland and the EU.” (T40, p. 212)

For others, questioning where they belong and which nation they feel closest to, increased the feeling of belonging to their home country as apparent by the following quote:

“Here is the funny thing: I have no interest in citizenship anymore. None! I have never felt so German and so proud and defensive about it. I’m questioning if I have been lying to myself for the last ten years: are friends my friends? Am I welcome here? ... To clarify: I’m in no way scared to be deported or even sent away. The shock to my system was more about how things have changed inside of me.” (T41, p. 215)

3.3.3 Feeling dehumanised

The way the rights of EU-citizens are used to negotiate a good deal for the UK in the Brexit negotiations called forth feelings in the contributors of being dehumanised. They felt reduced to negotiation material rather being understood as human beings who are integrated in a social network. The following quotations are examples for this subtheme in the testimonies:

“I now live in a country, which officially does not have my interests at heart. The government has decided to use my presence in the UK as a means to negotiate a better ‘deal’. Let’s get this straight: from today I’m a piece of bargaining fodder, not a person made of flesh and bone, not a life entrenched in the tapestry of this country for over thirty years.” (T3, p. 17)

“...my feelings change daily from anger to despair. Being the wife and the mother of British citizens count for nothing, having lived here for more than 12 years in total counts for nothing; there are three millions of us and we count for nothing, we are just pawns in a political game.” (T28, p. 144)

Another aspect of this subtheme was that European-citizens often got classified into different, more or less appreciated, subgroups depending on the wealth of the European country they originate from.

“I hate it when people tell me, “You are different – you will be ok,” as if there is some sort of class system of European migrants in the UK.” (T31, p.168)

“By the way, I have been told again and again that I am “not an immigrant, but an ex-pat”, coming from a wealthy country. THIS is an insult in itself.” (T12, p. 69)

3.3.4 Feeling unwanted

Despite feeling dehumanised and used by the UK government, several contributors of testimonies expressed the feeling of not being wanted by the British people. This feeling based either on to the result of the referendum in general or was due to irritating comments of British citizens. Contributors felt excluded by the social community as these examples show:

“I felt as if someone had died on that terrible day. I felt my idyllic image of Britain had been shattered and everyone was against me and my family.” (T23, p. 129)

“An idiot who used to work with me asked me if I had bought a ticket already to go back to my country. After that I broke a few ‘friendships’, couldn’t trust anyone, I felt betrayed. As if all that inclusion was a fake, a lie. Until that morning I felt part of something great, now I feel I am part of a group that is not welcome for no good reason.” (T38, p. 201)

The feeling of being unwanted affected the behaviour and well-being of EU-citizens as the following quotations demonstrate:

“For me one of the worst things is the psychological impact Brexit is having. Having been told in the supermarket to “go back home” I started paying only at the self-service check out.” (T31, p. 168)

“All was well till the Referendum. I’ve not felt the same since. I don’t feel safe anymore, I am nonstop on edge, afraid somebody will say anything about my accent. ... In January I had to call sick. My anxiety was so bad I wasn’t able to go into my garden. Tomorrow, after three and a half months, I am going back to work.” (T19, p. 104-105)

After living in the UK for many years and integrating in the social community of this country, to suddenly feel excluded due to an unexpected event left many EU-citizens

feeling disappointed and shocked. One contributor described this experience in the following way:

“Suddenly being part of a group of people who are considered ‘undesirable’ in this country has been both upsetting and humbling – as somebody from a well off western European country it’s a new experience, and it made me even more aware of the plight of refugees and immigrants in the world.” (T24, p. 131)

3.3.5 Questioning relationships

Brexit not only influenced how EU-citizens in the UK felt regarding the wider society, but also affected their close relationships to colleagues, friends, family members and partners and partly increased isolation. The following example shows the need for and the lack of available friends:

“However, since Brexit I have become very distressed and needed a lot of support from my friends, and I discovered I essentially do not have any real friends anymore and am now unsure if I ever did.” (T11, p. 61)

Not everyone experienced their friends abandoning them. In other cases, it was the EU-citizens themselves that distanced themselves from British friends. The following two quotations give explanations for this behaviour:

“Since the Referendum, I have slowly but surely become withdrawn from my British friends and colleagues.... They do have good intentions, feel ashamed and embarrassed – but I find it so draining to have to respond to comments such as: ‘you’ll be fine, this isn’t about you’, ‘but you’ve been here for ages’, ‘but you’re a public servant’ and my personal favourite so far: ‘but you’re normal, surely this doesn’t apply to you’. So it’s been easier to avoid the subject.” (T16, p. 96)

“I get annoyed with the apparent indifference and political apathy of many of my British friends – we just don’t have the same experience anymore. ...My family and friends back home don’t really understand either. I’m caught between two cultures with no idea what my next step should be.” (T41, p. 216)

Within the sample there are, however, accounts of EU-citizens, who describe positive effects of the situation on their social network. Two examples are given below:

“My British friends have been great, they make things much more bearable...They can see my distress.” (T38, p. 201)

“And really importantly, I have made new friends who share my experience of Brexit and who understand my anger, hurt and disbelief.” (T31, p. 169)

Several contributors described the situation to be part of families in which family members voted for ‘leave’ in the referendum. This situation often led to feelings of betrayal and caused many conflicts before and after the referendum. In the following quotation a contributor explains how the vote of her partner affected their relationship and her well-being:

“On a relationship level, my British boyfriend voted Leave. ...I left him but went back to him one month later. Nine months on and there are deep wounds in our relationship, admittedly there were issues to start with. I am still governed by feelings of betrayal and a sense of division within my relationship I feel that with his vote he jeopardised my sense of wellbeing.” (T29, p. 149-150)

Thus, Brexit transformed many social networks both positively and negatively. While some experienced support from friends and family, others encountered conflict, isolation and loneliness due to the situation. Additionally, feeling lost, unvalued and unwanted is likely to have intensified the negative psychological impact of the situation.

In conclusion, the thematic analysis of 43 testimonies revealed that the contributors of the sample coped with a great amount of uncertainty, experienced discrimination and had to deal with a variety of identity-related questions. Living in limbo, not being able to plan and being confronted with existential fears about the future caused high amounts of stress, increased anxieties and partly led to depression. Some contributors were able to reduce the impact of the uncertainty by becoming politically active, whereas the majority of contributors felt ignored by the British society and tried to cope with the feeling of powerlessness in various ways. Discrimination was encountered by the contributors of the sample on an institutional level as well as in the form of direct or indirect insults or attacks. It promoted the feeling of exclusion from the wider social community, caused stress, partly affected behaviour of EU-citizens and increased

isolation. Furthermore, the situation Brexit created, gave rise to a number of identity-related questions about belonging and the quality of relationships. Contributors reported feeling dehumanised by the British government and unwanted by significant parts of the British society. The situation promoted a transformation of social networks, with positive and negative effects, made contributors feel lost and provoked a reorientation regarding one's subjective national affiliation. The latter generally was a difficult and emotional process for many contributors, however the result often gave direction for next steps. Thus, the situation caused by Brexit affected the well-being of the contributors predominantly negatively. Experiencing strong social support, establishing new friendships and becoming politically active most likely buffered the negative impact and maybe even increased the well-being of contributors. However, these cases were limited.

4. Discussion

By applying thematic analysis to 43 testimonies of contributors who shared their personal Brexit story in the book 'In Limbo' (Remigi, et al., 2017), three main themes were identified in the data, which seemed relevant in relation to the aim of the study. The themes outlined in the previous section, were labelled 'Living with uncertainty', 'Experiencing discrimination' and 'Identity questioned'. In order to answer the research question: How has Brexit psychologically impacted the well-being of EU-citizens living in the UK? in the following section, these themes will be discussed in light of relevant research findings. The three sub-questions: "What were the effects of Brexit on the well-being of EU-citizens living in the UK?", "Who were most affected by the situation?" and "Will the effects on individuals' well-being be long lasting?" were used to structure the discussion and to systematically answer the broader research question. Additionally, limitations and areas for future research will be highlighted before finishing with a conclusion.

4.1 What were the effects of Brexit on the well-being of EU-citizens living in the UK?

In line with findings of research on refugees and immigrants who experienced long periods of uncertainty (see 1.2.2.1 Well-being and experiencing uncertainty), living in limbo since the referendum caused high amounts of stress in EU-citizens of the sample, impaired the sleep of some contributors and led to anxiety and depression in others (see 3.1. Living with uncertainty). The lack of knowledge about the future rights of EU-citizens in the UK, gave rise to several situational living difficulties, comparable to post-migration living difficulties found in other studies (Laban et al., 2005; Steel et al., 2011). Aside from encountering discrimination and not being able to plan ahead, contributors especially reported a variety of existential fears, ultimately leading to a lot of distress. As outlined in the introduction (see 1.2.2.1 Well-being and experiencing uncertainty), the directionality of the link between uncertainty, situational living difficulties and well-being has yet to be defined, but the data of this study suggested a bidirectional relationship. The contributor of T21 became more sensitive to comments on her language ability due to the situation, thus the same annoyance affected her more while living with uncertainty than before. Additionally to the impact of situational stressors, living in limbo also impacted the psychological functioning of contributors (Ryff, 1989). EU-citizens had no right to vote in the referendum and they often felt as if their opinion on the topic was not wanted (see e.g. T2). Consistent with previous findings regarding undocumented individuals (Gonzales et al., 2013), such a situation led to feelings of powerlessness as well as hopelessness and impeded environmental mastery of those EU-citizens, whose personal Brexit-story were analysed in this study. One contributor described her position as feeling like “a fly trapped behind a window” (T9, p. 42) and captured with this comparison the powerlessness many contributors experienced. A small number of contributors, however, were able to fight this position by becoming active, raising their opinion on the topic despite the missing audience and getting involved in political groups. Although becoming active in that way seems to be a possibility to reduce the negative

psychological impact of the uncertainty and to increase eudaimonic well-being (Gonzales et al., 2013), these steps require energy and mental stability, which may be limited in people suffering under large amounts of stress.

Encountering direct or indirect xenophobic attacks and in particular being ignored by British citizens led to stress, anxiety and social isolation within the sample (see 3.2 Experiencing discrimination). These symptoms were consistent with findings of previous research (see 1.2.2.2 Well-being and discrimination). In contrast to research on discrimination of minority groups (e.g. Priest et al. 2013), an increase of depressive symptoms as a reaction to those attacks was not reported in the sample. Besides the impact of discrimination on an individuals' subjective well-being, the negative influence of the experience on individuals' social well-being (Harrell, 2000; Keyes 1998) could also be found in the testimonies as many demonstrated a lack of trust in the British society after the referendum, felt excluded by parts of the society, withdrew from social interactions and questioned relationships. In addition to the experience of personal insults, contributors also often felt discriminated on an institutional level due to particular regulations set by the Home Office (see 3.2 Experiencing discrimination). Contributors of testimonies expressed the feeling that the government did not have their interest at heart (e.g. T3) and rather employed regulations that led to more obstacles for EU-citizens (e.g. T1 and T27). The obstacles of bureaucratic requirements could be interpreted as further situational living difficulty (Laban et al., 2005) causing stress and thus impacting well-being of EU-citizens negatively. Moreover, feeling deserted and betrayed by the British government is likely to have increased the negative impact of personal discrimination, since Fozdar and Torezani (2008) showed that discrimination is affecting the well-being of individuals less when experienced in a country that is perceived as fair. Whether some of the contributors increased their eudaimonic well-being due to the experience of discrimination as suggested by Ryff and colleagues (2003) is difficult to answer. It could be argued that those individuals who became politically active increased their eudaimonic well-being, however, it is questionable whether the experience of

discrimination or rather the feeling of powerlessness due to the uncertainty motivated some to set new goals and to grow personally.

Due to the important role of a reliable social network in times of adverse life events (see 1.2.2.3 Well-being and social integration), feeling included in the wider society as well as in a private social network is likely to influence the extent to which Brexit caused stress and negatively affected well-being (Hagerty & Williams, 1999). Most contributors reported not feeling part of the British society anymore since the referendum, however the reliability of their private social networks varied significantly and influenced to which degree relevant others remained as a stress buffer and source of support during the time living in limbo (see 4.2 Who were most affected by the situation). Independently of the availability of support by friends and family members, the experience of social exclusion is likely to have affected psychological functioning as the situation caused by Brexit made it difficult for EU-citizens to remain autonomous, to feel as a part of a meaningful group and to master their lives (Haslam, et al., 2009; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). The contributor of T19 provided an example of how significantly the situation impaired her psychological functioning as she had not been able to master her daily life, which included going to work for several months. Moreover, contributors of the testimonies reported feeling unwanted and dehumanised by large parts of the British society and by the government. They reacted to it for instance with anxiety, social withdrawal and changed behaviour (see 3.3 Identity questioned). As Bernstein (2016) stressed, feeling dehumanised and experiencing discrimination further increases social exclusion. Thus, by being used as a bargaining chip as expressed by many contributors of the sample (e.g. T28) and experiencing discrimination not only on a personal but also on an institutional level, the government further reinforced the experience of social exclusion. Furthermore, feeling excluded by parts of the British society provoked in contributors the feelings of lacking protection and not belonging anywhere (e.g. T3). Gonzales et al. (2012) demonstrated that the experience of social exclusion is likely to promote the rise of identity related questions. Due to the result of the referendum having questioned the

belongingness of the contributors to the British society, the feeling of homelessness often promoted a reflection on their national identity. Whilst some (e.g. the contributor of T41) reconnected to their country of origin as a result of this process, more individuals of the sample defined Europe as their (new) home. This is probably the case as Europe gives individuals who understand themselves as trans-nationalist an identity that provides them both with freedom and security simultaneously (Smith, 1992; Vertovec, 2004). Although the process of redefining one's national identity has likely been a challenging and an emotional process, which probably reduced the level of well-being of EU-citizens (Karas, Cieciuch, Negru & Crocetti, 2015), the outcome should have had a positive effect on their psychological and social well-being. Associating with a new group after feeling excluded by the British society not only should have enabled them to regain self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) but the process should have also promoted self-awareness, which is positively linked to well-being (Cloninger, 2006). Thus, knowing one's position and feeling part of a new group should have buffered the effects of uncertainty and discrimination for those who engaged in this cognitive process (Haslam, et al., 2009).

In summary, the experience of uncertainty, discrimination and social exclusion impacted contributors' subjective, psychological and social well-being. Although most of the psychological impact of Brexit reduced the levels of well-being in EU-citizens, some effects, e.g. redefining one's national identity, potentially had a stabilising effect.

4.2 Who were most affected by the situation?

Through analysing the testimonies of the sample, it became apparent that the situation caused by Brexit affected individuals to different degrees. The impact on contributors' well-being depended on both their personal situation (e.g. the prevalence of pre-existing difficulties) and also on how they reacted to the situation. Contributors who suffered with poor physical and mental health or faced financial difficulties reported more often not to be able to cope with the additional stress caused by Brexit (see 3.1 Living

with uncertainty). Referring to the ill and those who cared for others, one contributor stated: “As usual it is those who are the most disadvantaged that suffer the most” (T32, p.177). Individuals who experienced a mental overload due to the severe stress caused by Brexit as well as another source, either reported losing hope or to have decided to leave the country before the end of the negotiation period (see 3.1 Living with uncertainty). Although the second option can be understood as an attempt of contributors to increase their level of well-being and prevent further harm, for someone who feels at home in the UK and decides to move away due to an unbearable amount of stress, this step does not guarantee a full recovery of one’s well-being. This is because firstly, settling somewhere else can cause additional stress (Eggerth & Flynn, 2013) and secondly, because achieving goals that are incongruent with one’s desire are not beneficial for one’s well-being (Brunstein, et al., 1998). In addition to contributors with pre-existing difficulties, young EU-citizens going through adolescence in times of Brexit could be seen as another vulnerable group (Correa-Velez et al., 2010; Kessler et al., 2007). Fears of children due to experienced uncertainty were described in several testimonies and T34 pointed to the issue that in transition periods these fears could also impair psychological functioning. It can be argued that growing up in a tense political climate, experiencing the stress of parents as well as living with uncertainty about future access to universities and the job market may affect social interactions and identity formation in young EU-citizens. This assumption is based on previous research on youth in comparable situations, which showed that such environmental conditions were associated with stress, social withdrawal and anxiety (Gonzales et al., 2013). Finding one’s place in life is a difficult task for young people in general; doing this whilst coping with uncertainty and discrimination in the times of Brexit makes it more difficult.

It became apparent in the testimonies that individuals encountered discrimination in different forms and to different degrees. Drawing on previous research findings (see 1.2.2.2 Well-being and discrimination), it is likely that the extent to which discrimination affected EU-citizens depended: firstly on whether they have faced direct or indirect insult;

secondly on whether they belonged to visual-minority groups, for example like people from the south of Europe; and thirdly, whether their nationality has been especially targeted by indirect discrimination as it happened to many Eastern European citizens (Myślińska, 2016). Nevertheless, the data used in this study did not allow a test to the degree of which the origin of EU-citizens played a role regarding the experience of discrimination. A quantitative study directly measuring the quantity and type of discrimination particular groups of EU-citizens encountered since the referendum would be necessary to gain a better understanding of this matter.

Furthermore, the way in which contributors reacted to Brexit, which largely depended on available resilience factors (see 1.2.3 Well-being and resilience), defined the extent to which Brexit affected their well-being. In the face of social exclusion and uncertainty it is important to find other sources to remain hopeful and to stay mentally stable, whether this is joining together with other similarly affected EU-citizens, finding support within personal networks or becoming politically active (Gonzales et al., 2013; Rumbaut, 2008). Individuals generally possess several social identities (Haslam, et al., 2009) and shifting the focus away from the group that is not welcoming is necessary to restore one's well-being. Connecting to others, e.g. other EU-citizens who find themselves in a similar situation, has been found to be beneficial for one's well-being as it provides opportunities to increase self-esteem as well as the likelihood to receive social support (Outten, Schmitt, Garcia & Branscomb, 2009; Schweitzer, Melvilla, Steel & Lacherez, 2006). Identification with a minority group, however, can also have negative effects if one holds a negative opinion about this group (Hughes, Kiecolt, Keith & Demo, 2015). Thus if someone has a negative relationship to his or her country of origin it may not be favourable if this person joins together with others of his or her native country. Nevertheless, those contributors who were able to find a place of belonging within a different group, gained meaning by protesting against Brexit and tried to move on seemed to be less negatively affected by the situation than those who remained focussed on the loss of their former identity (see 3.3 Identity questioned). Aside from the

flexible use of adaptive coping strategies, the availability of a reliable social network is similarly important (Billings & Moos, 1980; Cohen, 2004). As indicated above (see 3.3 Identity questioned) Brexit led to a transformation of social networks for many contributors. Thus, it is important to consider whether individuals perceived the availability of support although their social networks might have changed due to the situation. Whilst some contributors reported a loss of friends and a disruption within relationships, others gained new friends or received support by their close ones. Since social support can be provided from different sources and on different levels (Lin et al., 1999), it is important to consider the different levels of relationships that were affected by Brexit. Those individuals of the sample, who felt excluded by parts of the British society but could still rely on their friends for support, seemed less affected by the experience (e.g. T38). The same counts for those who built up new relationships for example to other EU-citizens (e.g. T31). In the case of those who felt excluded by the society and let down by their British friends or even worse by family members (e.g. T11 and T29), the lack of social support often led to isolation and affected well-being negatively. This is in line with the finding of Targosz et al. (2003) who found that social exclusion is likely to impact mental health more negatively when individuals encounter other life stressors at the same time. Feeling betrayed by friends or having arguments with family members about the situation caused by the referendum could act as these additional stressors. Taken together, those who were not able to cope flexibly with the situation and lacked a reliable support network after the referendum were in danger to lose hope and thus to develop mental illnesses such as depression (Cruwys et al., 2014). Whether these individuals lacked resilience due to particular personality characteristics, as suggested by previous research (see 1.2.3 Well-being and resilience), could not be inferred from the data.

4.3 Will the effects on individuals' well-being be long lasting?

Whether the situation caused by Brexit will affect the well-being of EU-citizens living in the UK temporarily or for a long period will depend to some extent on environmental factors. Several contributors pointed to an anti-European atmosphere in the UK since the Brexit debate had started (see 3.2 Experiencing discrimination). Whether EU-citizens will be able to recover from the impact Brexit had on their well-being, will be influenced to some extent by the atmosphere in the UK after Brexit, being either including or excluding towards people from the continent (Burnett, 2017; Myślińska, 2016). In the case that EU-citizens would continue to feel excluded by the wider society post Brexit, this could not only continue to affect their subjective and social well-being but also their psychological functioning, as individuals can only live up to their full potential in a social climate that allows them to flourish and live without fears (Correa-Velez et al., 2010). Moreover, future experiences of discrimination and conflicts could further reduce their sense of belonging, which again can have long lasting effects on well-being, e.g. through the onset and maintenance of depression (Hagerty & Williams, 1999).

In addition to the atmosphere in the country, the resilience of individuals influences how long the psychological impact of Brexit will reduce contributors' level of well-being (see 1.2.3 Well-being and resilience). Reflecting on the variety of personal Brexit stories explored within this study, it can be suggested that Brexit has been a traumatic event for some but not for all Europeans living in the UK due to the variety of degrees it has affected individuals (Lucas, 2007). Those who perceived it as a traumatic life event reported similar psychological symptoms, e.g. fear, vulnerability, isolation and depression, as those who had experienced a natural catastrophe (Fahrudin, 2012). Nevertheless, for most contributors although the referendum caused high amounts of stress and produced many changes in their lives, resilience factors helped them to remain hopeful and to move on with their daily lives. Considering the findings on the impact of negative life events of previous research (see 1.2.1 Well-being and negative

life events) it is likely that the negative effects on the well-being of EU-citizens who perceived Brexit as a negative but not as a traumatic life event will not be long lasting. Thus, the majority of citizens should recover to their former level of well-being soon after the negotiations have finished and the uncertainty is over. A full recovery before the end of the negotiation period is unlikely however as adaptation to the new situation is impeded by a lack of information on the conditions to which EU-citizens could live in the UK after Brexit (Frederick & Löwenstein, 1999; Bueltmann, 2018). Although previous research findings suggest that the psychological impact of Brexit is of limited duration for the majority of EU-citizens, it is reasonable to assume that members of vulnerable groups, e.g. ill people, the poor, and maybe also young people in transition periods, will be affected to a larger degree and for a longer period of time (see 4.2 Who were most affected by the situation?). This conclusion is based on the assumption that the situation of those EU-citizens who lost hope and became isolated due to the situation is comparable to the case of widows or unemployed individuals, whose well-being has been shown to be potentially affected for many years (see 1.2.1 Well-being and negative life events). Thus, in extreme cases, affected EU-citizens may not be able to restore their well-being without professional help. This need has been recognised for example by a group of psychotherapists in London, who offer free counselling for Europeans suffering from this situation (Weaver, 2018), but should also be recognised by the government which is responsible for the situation Europeans in the UK are facing due to Brexit.

4.4 Limitations and indications for future research

By choosing testimonies of contributors of various nationalities and by selecting those texts that allowed an insight into the variety of experiences contributors made due to this unique political situation, this study aimed to explore how Brexit impacted the well-being of EU-citizens living in the UK. However, the extent to which the findings of this study can be generalised from the contributors of chosen testimonies to other EU-citizens who were affected by Brexit is questionable. Relying on published material, the researcher had no influence on the data collection of the book and has only little

information on how contributors were recruited. Additionally, the majority of contributors seemed to have finished higher education, which provokes the question if the findings of this study are also representative for less educated individuals, who might experience higher levels of uncertainty and discrimination. Furthermore, the contributors wrote their testimonies at a particular point in time and their experiences of the situation may have since changed significantly. However, the different contributors wrote their personal stories at different stages as some described their feelings shortly after the referendum and others mentioned that they had been living in limbo for a long period. Nevertheless, a longitudinal study would be needed to investigate how the impact of Brexit on the well-being of EU-citizens has changed over time.

With regards to the methodological choices of this study the use of alternative data could have been more beneficial. The contributors of the testimonies used in this study, told their personal story and were not explicitly asked to describe the effects of the situation on their well-being, nor was their well-being measured. Rather than using testimonies, interviewing EU-citizens to collect information on their well-being since the referendum could have provided a more complete picture of the impact. Nevertheless the richness of the material used had its advantages and the fact that the findings are predominantly in line with previous research findings on comparable populations justifies the choice of data. As Vaismoradi and colleagues (2013) stressed, the quality of findings depends to some extent on the effort of the researcher. By applying a systematic but also time-consuming procedure to choose relevant testimonies from the book (see 2.3 Procedure) and by answering the research question guided by sub-questions, the researcher aimed to increase the quality of the study. Nevertheless, the fact that most of the analytic process was done by only one researcher can be seen as a limitation of this study as Côté and Turgeon (2005) highlighted that the credibility of findings is likely to be higher when more researcher get involved in the process of analysis.

With regards to future research on the topic, this study has pointed to the fact that EU-citizens, especially those of vulnerable groups may be in need of professional

help to overcome the psychological impact Brexit had on their lives. Further qualitative and quantitative studies should be undertaken on this population after the UK has left the EU, to evaluate how many EU-citizens living in the UK lacked the resilience to cope with the situation and therefore continue to have reduced levels of well-being even after they had time to adjust to the situation post Brexit. This is necessary to draw attention to the cases of EU-citizens who have found themselves in unfortunate positions during Brexit which made them experience it as a traumatic life event, promoting post-traumatic reactions in the aftermath. Especially, if the access to the NHS should change for EU-citizens after Brexit, the government should be aware of the need to provide professional help for this population. The fact that research findings on the negative impact of temporary protection visas on immigrants' well-being promoted some changes of immigration policies in Australia (Steel et al., 2011) demonstrates the importance of further studies on the well-being of individuals whose belonging to a society is under question. The findings of this study suggest that EU-citizens were negatively affected by the long period of uncertainty and by the complicated bureaucratic procedure to gain citizenship. Thus, in case a similar situation should occur in a different country, politicians should ensure that individuals have to experience as little uncertainty as possible. Additionally, they should offer professional help for those groups of people who are likely to be affected the most, for a prevention towards the onset of mental and physical illnesses in these individuals.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate how Brexit has psychologically impacted the well-being of EU-citizens living in the UK. The thematic analysis of 43 testimonies taken from the book 'In Limbo' (Remigi, et al., 2017) revealed that Brexit affected the subjective, psychological and social well-being of contributors through the experiences of

uncertainty and discrimination as well as by questioning their social identity. In line with previous research, this impact was mainly of negative nature, however gaining self-awareness through redefining one's national identity and gaining control back by becoming politically active possibly buffered the negative effect or even increased levels of well-being in some contributors. Moreover, it became apparent that EU-citizens have been affected by the political situation to a different degree depending on their perception and reaction to the life event. Vulnerable groups of contributors, who had to deal with additional stressors during the time of Brexit or lacked relevant resilience factors, likely experienced Brexit as a traumatic life event. These individuals who have lost hope, became isolated or developed mental illnesses due to the additional amount of stress Brexit caused in their lives could need professional help. Their level of well-being is also likely to stay reduced for a time even after the negotiations between the UK and the EU will have finished and the uncertainty is over. However, for those EU-citizens who possessed resilience in times of Brexit, the negative impact of the event should be temporary-limited. They should adapt to the new situation and restore their former level of well-being as soon as clarity about their future rights exist.

Future research should investigate how many EU-citizens experienced Brexit as a traumatic life event and are in need of professional help, to raise awareness for those suffering under the situation. Additionally, further research on populations that live with uncertainty and experience social exclusion is important to provide academic evidence to question policies of countries that negatively affect the well-being of individuals.

6. References

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7. Appendices

Appendix A: *List of chosen testimonies from the book 'In Limbo'*

Testimonies (T) of the sample	Page numbers of testimonies in the book 'In Limbo' (2017)
T1	p. 9-12
T2	p. 13-15
T3	p. 17-18
T4	p. 21-24
T5	p. 25-27
T6	p. 34-35
T7	p. 35-36
T8	p. 39-41
T9	p. 41-42
T10	p. 48-50
T11	p. 61-63
T12	p. 68-70
T13	p. 75-76
T14	p. 80-81
T15	p. 92-94
T16	p. 96-97
T17	p. 100-101
T18	p. 102-103
T19	p. 104-105
T20	p. 108
T21	p. 117-118
T22	p. 122-123
T23	p. 129-130
T24	p. 130-131
T25	p. 131-134
T26	p. 136-138
T27	p. 138-139
T28	p. 143-144
T29	p. 149-150
T30	p. 161-163

T31	p. 168-169
T32	p. 176-177
T33	p. 179-180
T34	p. 180-181
T35	p. 181-183
T36	p. 195-196
T37	p. 198-200
T38	p. 200-201
T39	p. 206-208
T40	p. 211-212
T41	p. 215-216
T42	p. 216-217
T43	p. 220-224

Appendix B: Approved ethics application

H4

Staff / Office Use Only

DOPEC NUMBER: Click here to enter text. KRAS030518

Umbrella project DOPEC number (staff) Click here to enter text.

APPLICANT SURNAME Reimers

APPLICANT:	UG <input type="checkbox"/>	PGT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	PGR <input type="checkbox"/>	Staff <input type="checkbox"/>
REVIEW PROCESS:	Accelerated <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Full <input type="checkbox"/>		
APPLICATION STATUS:	New application <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Major amendment <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission <input type="checkbox"/>			
APPLICATION FOR:	Dissertation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Teaching <input type="checkbox"/> Research & publication <input type="checkbox"/>			
ATTENDANCE AT HEALTH & SAFETY BRIEFING:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
INCLUSION OF RISK ASSESSMENT FORM:	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

NOTES ON THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY ETHICS COMMITTEE.

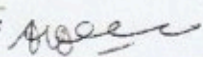
- All decisions of the committee are based on the application form and reviewers comments ONLY. Forms should be as detailed and clear as possible. Verbal discussions are not considered as part of the application or review process.
- The review process strictly adheres to the University of Chester Research Governance Handbook and the BPS Code of Ethics.
- The decision of the committee is final. If you are a UG, PGT or PGR student you should discuss the decision of the committee with your supervisor. If you are a member of staff you may contact the chair of the committee for further clarification.

Before completing the form researchers are expected to familiarise themselves with the regulatory codes and codes of conduct and ethics relevant to their areas of research, including those of relevant professional organisations and ensure that research which they propose is designed to comply with such codes.

Department of Psychology Ethical Approval for Research: Procedural Guidelines.
University of Chester Research Governance Handbook
http://ganymede2.chester.ac.uk/view.php?title_id=522471
BPS Code of Ethics
http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/bps_code_of_ethics_2009.pdf
BPS Code of Human Research Ethics
http://www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/code_of_human_research_ethics.pdf
BPS Guidelines for Internet-mediated Research
<http://www.bps.org.uk/system/files/Public%20files/inf206-guidelines-for-internet-mediated-research.pdf>
BPS Research Guidelines and Policy Documents
<http://www.bps.org.uk/publications/policy-and-guidelines/research-guidelines-policy-documents/research-guidelines-poli>

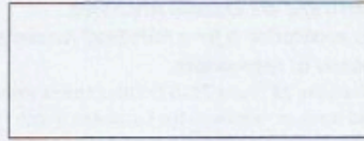
Any queries email: n.davies@chester.ac.uk or psychology_ethics@chester.ac.uk

CHECK LIST.								
Please complete the form below indicating attached materials. Prior to submission supervisors must confirm that they have reviewed the application by completing the supervisors column.								
Notes: Students to indicate where information is found, supervisor to confirm by ticking green column	Supervisor confirmation	Information sheet	Letter	Email	Email info. page	Consent Form	PowerPoint	N/A
Brief details about the purpose of the study	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Contact details for further information	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Explanation of how and why participant has been chosen	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Notification that materials/interviews are not diagnostic tools/therapy or used for staff review/development purposes	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Explanation participation is voluntary	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Details of any incentives or compensation	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Details of how consent will be obtained	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
If research is observational, consent to being observed	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Details of procedure so participants are informed about what to expect	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Details of time commitments expected	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Details of any stimuli used	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Explanation of right to withdraw and right to withdraw procedure	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Option for omitting questions participant does not wish to answer	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Procedure regarding partially completed questionnaires or interviews	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
With interviews, information regarding time limit for withdrawal	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Details of any advantages and benefits of taking part	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Details of any disadvantages and risks of taking part	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Information that data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, those data will not be identifiable as theirs	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Debriefing details	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Dissemination information	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
Further information (relevant literature; support networks etc)	X	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	X

Supervisor Signature: 	Date: 17/04/2018
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WHEN COMPLETING THE FORM PLEASE REFER TO THE DOP ETHICS PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES HANDBOOK.
UG AND PGT STUDENTS CAN ACCESS A COPY ON THEIR RELEVANT MOODLE PAGE.
PGR AND STAFF SHOULD CONTACT n.davies@chester.ac.uk or psychology_ethics@chester.ac.uk

1. Working title of the study

Notes: The title should be a single sentence

Political Psychology: "Brexit means Brexit" but what does it mean for European Union citizens living in the UK? A qualitative study exploring the effects of uncertainty caused by the result of the referendum.

2. Applicant name and contact details

Notes: The primary applicant is the name of the person who has overall responsibility for the study. Include their appointment or position held and their qualifications. For studies where students and/or research assistants will undertake the research, the primary applicant is the student (UG, PGT, PGR) and supervisor is the co-applicant.

Kristin Reimers (Student; 0718836)

3. Co-applicants

Notes: List the names of all researchers involved in the study. Include their appointment or position held and their qualifications

Dr Astrid Schepman (Supervisor)

4. Start and end dates of the study

Notes: The title should be a single sentence

July 2018 to October 2018

5. Is this project subject to external funding?

Notes: Please provide details of the funding body, grant application and PI.

No.

6. Briefly describe the purpose and rational of the research

Notes: (Maximum 300 words). In writing the rationale make sure that the research proposed is grounded in relevant literature, and the hypotheses emerge from recent

research and are logically structured.

If this application is for a PGR/Staff funded project please attach any detailed research proposals as appropriate.

On Thursday 23rd June 2016 British citizens voted in a referendum whether the United Kingdom should leave or remain in the European Union (EU). Since 51.9 % of the votes were in favour of a "Brexit", Theresa May triggered Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty on 29th March 2017, giving the UK and the EU two years to negotiate the separation. The result of the referendum causes uncertainty in many areas of British life, do to its' unique situation in the history of the European Union and consequences are difficult to predict. Regardless of how the situation will look like after March 2019, this country will have experienced a great deal of uncertainty for nearly three years. The media frequently reports about the effects of the uncertainty on the British economy. This study however is concerned with the effects on the 3.2 million EU citizens living in the UK who are dealing with uncertainty concerning their future since the result of the referendum was announced. In order to evaluate the psychological impact of this situation on this group of people, several samples of testimonials from the book *In Limbo: Brexit testimonies from EU citizens in the UK* (2017, E. Remigi & V. Martin (Eds.)) will be analysed. The qualitative method of thematic analysis will be used to identify psychological themes in the data in order to evaluate how the uncertainty of this time influences the psychological wellbeing of EU citizens in the UK after the referendum.

7a. Describe the methods and procedures of the study

Notes: (Maximum 500 words) Attach any relevant material (questionnaires, supporting information etc.) as appendices and summarise them briefly here (e.g. Cognitive Failures Questionnaire: a standardised self-report measure on the frequency of everyday cognitive slips). Do not merely list the names of measures and/or their acronyms. Include information about any interventions, interview schedules, duration, order and frequency of assessments. It should be clear exactly what will happen to participants. If this is a media based study describe and list materials include links and sampling procedure.

The qualitative method of thematic analysis will be used to analyse samples from the book *In Limbo*. The study aims to find out how several EU citizens living in the UK reacted to the uncertainty following the referendum and how it affected their wellbeing. It is intended to evaluate the chosen cases in light of relevant background literature on uncertainty and wellbeing and to compare them to the situation of asylum seekers.

7b. Provide details of your contingency plan

Notes: Please briefly describe your contingency plan. (100 words)

The fact that the data is taken from a book reduces the risk of a delay. If an unexpected problem occurs in the process of writing my dissertation, I will discuss the situation with my supervisor or programme leader.

8. Provide details of the previous experience of the procedures by the person conducting the study.

Notes: Say who will be undertaking the procedures involved and what training and/or experience they have. If supervision is necessary, indicate who will provide it.

I have learnt about different qualitative methods and gained experience with qualitative analysis in the module Researching Thoughts and Behaviour (PS 7301). Additionally, I conducted a thematic analysis to find relevant themes in an interview in the module Social Psychology (PS7315).

9. Describe the ethical issues raised by this study and discuss the measures taken to address them.

Notes: Describe any discomfort or inconvenience that participants may experience.

Include information about procedures that for some people could be physically stressful or might impact on the safety of participants, e.g. interviews, probing questions, noise levels, visual stimuli, equipment; or that for some people could be psychologically stressful, e.g. mood induction procedures, tasks with high failure rate, please include your distress protocol. Discuss any issues of anonymity and confidentiality as they relate to your study, refer to ethics handbook and guidance notes at the end of the form. If animal based include ethical issues relating to observation.

The study will follow the ethical code of conduct and the principles of the code of human research ethics of the British Psychological Society.

All materials and quotes from the book *In Limbo* will be referenced properly. I will not use names in my dissertation, but rather include page numbers, gender and nationality (if listed) so that my quotes can be traced. All testimonials in the book are shared with the full consent of the writers.

The data is publicly available and no recruitment or interaction with participants is needed.

10. Describe the participants of the study.

Notes: Describe the groups of participants that will be recruited and the principal eligibility criteria and ineligibility criteria. Make clear how many participants you plan to recruit into the study in total.

A sample of testimonials from the book *In Limbo* (2017) will be used for analysis. The selection of testimonials from the book will depend on the themes that emerge after familiarisation with the data and the background literature.

11. Describe the participant recruitment procedures for the study.

Notes: Gives details of how potential participants will be identified or recruited, please list any social media platforms that you will use and the message. Include all other advertising materials (posters, emails, letters, verbal script etc.) as appendices and refer to them as appropriate. Describe any screening examinations. If it serves to explain the procedures better, include as an appendix a flow chart and refer to it.

No recruitment is necessary as a sample of testimonials from the book *In Limbo* (2017) is used for the study.

12. Describe the procedures to obtain informed consent

*Notes: Describe when consent will be obtained. If consent is from **adult participants**, give details of who will take consent and how it will be done. If you plan to seek informed consent from **vulnerable groups** (e.g. people with learning difficulties, victims of crime), say how you will ensure that consent is voluntary and fully informed.*

*If you are recruiting **children or young adults** (aged under 18 years) specify the age-range of participants and describe the arrangements for seeking informed consent from a person with parental responsibility. If you intend to provide children under 16 with information about the study and seek agreement, outline how this process will vary according to their age and level of understanding.*

How long will you allow potential participants to decide whether or not to take part?

What arrangements have been made for people who might not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information given in English, or who have special communication needs?

If you are not obtaining consent, explain why not.

N/A, samples of the book *In Limbo* (2017) will be used for analysis. All testimonials in the book are shared with the full consent of the writers.

13. Will consent be written?

Yes ☐ No ☒

Notes: If yes, include a consent form as an appendix. If no, describe and justify an alternative procedure (verbal, electronic etc.) in the space below.

Guidance on how to draft Participant Information sheet and Consent form can be found on PS6001 Moodle space and in the Handbook.

N/A, (see above)

14. Describe the information given to participants. Indicate if and why any information on procedures or purpose of the study will be withheld.

Notes: Include an Information Sheet that sets out the purpose of the study and what will be required of the participant as appendices and refer to it as appropriate. If any information is to be withheld, justify this decision. More than one Information Sheet may be necessary.

N/A

15. Indicate if any personally identifiable information is to be made available beyond the research team. (eg: a report to an organisation)

Notes: If so, indicate to whom and describe how confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained at all stages.

When publishing the testimonials in the book *In Limbo* (2017) writers chose whether they stayed anonymous or used their names or initials. When referring to the testimonials in my dissertation, names will not be used.

16. Describe any payments, expenses or other benefits and inducements offered to participants.

Notes: Give details. If it is monetary say how much, how it will be paid and on what basis is the amount determined. Indicate RPS credits.

N/A

17. Describe the information about the investigation given to participants at the end of the study.

Notes: Give details of debriefings, ways of alleviating any distress that might be caused by the study and ways of dealing with any clinical problem that may arise relating to the focus of the study.

N/A

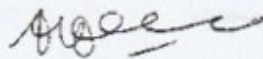
18. Describe data security arrangements for during and after the study.

Notes: Digital data stored on a computer requires compliance with the Data Protection Act; indicate if you have discussed this with your supervisor and describe any special circumstances that have been identified from that discussion. Say who will have access to participants' personal data and for how long personal data will be stored or accessed after the study has ended.

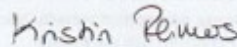
All data will be anonymised and stored on a password-protected computer.

SIGNATURES OF THE RESEARCH TEAM

Notes: The primary applicant and all co-applicants must sign and date the form. Scanned or electronic signatures are acceptable.



17.04.2018



17.04.2018

ETHICS COMMITTEE DATE

[Click here to enter a date.](#)



ACCEPTABLE

You may now commence data collection subject to approval from any relevant external agencies.

CHAIRS COMMENTS

- ☐ Read and review all reviewers comments

DATA COLLECTION IS NOT PERMISSABLE UNDER THE FOLLOWING 3 CONDITIONS. Please address the issues indicated.

- ☐ **ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO SUBMISSION OF AMENDMENT FORM**

UG and PG students should discuss any recommendations with their supervisors.

- ☐ **ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS OF CHAIR**

Resubmit application for full review after addressing the issues described, ensuring you have indicated on the front page of the form that this is a resubmission.

- ☐ **REVISE AND RESUBMIT**

Resubmit application for full review ensuring you have indicated on the front page of the form that this is a resubmission

SIGNATURE:  [Click here to enter text.](#)



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**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
ETHICS REVIEW FORM**

When completing this form, please highlight the appropriate response to each question (e.g. underline, italicise, delete unwanted responses). Make any comments that you feel should be raised either next to each section or at the end in the general comments box.

Name of applicant: Kristin Reimers

Project title: Political Psychology: "Brexit means Brexit" but what does it mean for European Union citizens living in the UK? A qualitative study exploring the effects of uncertainty caused by the result of the referendum.

Applicant status: PGT

1. Has the applicant signed and dated the form?

a) Yes

2. What is the submission type?

a) First submission to this or any other committee? Yes

3. Research Plan and Methodology (Qu 4, 6 & 7)

a) Are the timescales provided appropriate?
Yes

b) Are there contingency details?
Yes

c) Is the study well formulated in terms of drawing on the relevant literature and is it methodologically, analytically and scientifically sound?
Yes

d) Are appropriate debrief details provided?
NA

e) Has the applicant provided appropriate details of where the research will take place?
NA

f) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning data analysis?
Yes

4. Ethical Issues (Qu 9)

a) Is there consideration of how to minimise, manage and monitor issues of distress and harm, however minor?
NA

b) Are appropriate details regarding the use and management of deception provided?
NA

- c) Has the applicant provided appropriate details including regarding permission and appropriate health and safety information for conducting the study at the proposed location? Is the necessary documentation attached?
Yes

- d) Has the applicant provided an appropriate overview of how they would manage participant distress?
NA

5. Sample size, participants and recruitment (Qu 10 – 14)

- a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details of the sample and how it will be identified?
Yes (Sampling from book on purposive basis following initial reading for themes following Braun & Clark)
- b) If using social media for recruitment have details been provided on
NA
- c) Has the applicant provided appropriate details and attached the necessary documentation concerning their recruitment procedures? In particular, have they appropriately considered how to minimise, manage and monitor issues of distress and harm during recruitment?
NA
- d) Are there appropriate details on the information sheet regarding the following (if applicable):
NA

6. Dissemination (Qu15)

- a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning research dissemination?
Yes
- b) Are there appropriate details regarding any specific considerations about sharing the research?
Yes

7. Participant payments and inducements (Qu16)

- a) Are there appropriate details regarding compensation arrangements?
NA

8. Debrief (Qu17)

- a) Are appropriate debrief details provided?
NA
- b) Are there appropriate details about how participants will be debriefed should they decide to withdraw from an online study?
NA

9. Data Security (Qu18)

- a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning data protection and storage?
Yes
- b) Have security issues been properly considered?
Yes

- c) Are there appropriate details regarding how privacy and confidentiality will be maintained during dissemination?
Yes

10. Forum-based projects: NA – but book, so some relevance

- a) Is the content of the website (book) openly accessible?
Yes
- b) Has the applicant discussed what will happen with users who expressly state that they do not wish their responses to be used for research purposes?
NA
- c) Has the applicant explained how online (book) data collected will be anonymized?
Yes
- d) Has the applicant explained process of access, should the host website require posts to be posted through moderators
NA
- e) Has the applicant detailed how, where appropriate, they will ensure that age limits are met?
NA

General comments: The application is for a project using publicly available archival data. All ethical issues that arise from this have been addressed.

Review status (please highlight one of the following):

Chair's action x

Staff/PGR for full review

UG/PGT for full review

Work with external agencies

Work with vulnerable participants

Other issues/concerns

NAME: Astrid Schepman

ROLE: Supervisor

DATE: 19/4/18



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DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
ETHICS REVIEW FORM

When completing this form, please highlight the appropriate response to each question (e.g. underline, italicise, delete unwanted responses). Make any comments that you feel should be raised either next to each section or at the end in the general comments box.

Name of applicant: Kristin Reimers

Project title: Political Psychology: "Brexit means Brexit" but what does it mean for European Union citizens living in the UK?

Applicant status: UG PGT PGR Staff

1. Has the applicant signed and dated the form?

a) Yes / No → Return to applicant for signature before continuing with review process.

2. What is the submission type?

a) First submission to this or any other committee? Yes / No

b) Resubmission of a rejected application by this committee

• Is there a summary of the requirements of the committee and is the original application attached? Yes / No → Return to applicant for full details

c) Revised submission intended to replace an application approved by this committee

• Is the original application attached? Yes / No → Return to applicant for full details

d) First submission to this committee; has been submitted to another committee.

• Is the original application attached? Yes / No → Return to applicant for full details

3. Research Plan and Methodology (Qu 4, 6 & 7)

a) Are the timescales provided appropriate?

Yes / No Comments:

b) Are there contingency details?

Yes / No Comments: Project is on pre-existing data so very unlikely

c) Is the study well formulated in terms of drawing on the relevant literature and is it methodologically, analytically and scientifically sound?

Yes / No Comments:

d) Are appropriate debrief details provided?

Yes / No Comments: N/A

e) Has the applicant provided appropriate details of where the research will take place?

Yes / No Comments:

f) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning data analysis?

Yes / No Comments:

4. Ethical Issues (Qu 9)

- a) Is there consideration of how to minimise, manage and monitor issues of distress and harm, however minor?
Yes / No Comments:
- b) Are appropriate details regarding the use and management of deception provided?
Yes / No / N/A Comments: N/A
- c) Has the applicant provided appropriate details including regarding permission and appropriate health and safety information for conducting the study at the proposed location? Is the necessary documentation attached?
Yes / No Comments: N/A
- d) Has the applicant provided an appropriate overview of how they would manage participant distress?
Yes / No / N/A (online study) Comments: N/A

5. Sample size, participants and recruitment (Qu 10 – 14)

- a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details of the sample and how it will be identified?
Yes / No Comments: N/A
- b) If using social media for recruitment have details been provided on
- a. Proposed sites
- Facebook ☐
- Twitter ☐
- Instagram ☐
- Other, please Specify
- Comments:
- b. Social media messages?
- Facebook ☐
- Twitter ☐
- Instagram ☐
- Other, please Specify
- Comments:
- c) Has the applicant provided appropriate details and attached the necessary documentation concerning their recruitment procedures? In particular, have they appropriately considered how to minimise, manage and monitor issues of distress and harm during recruitment?
Yes / No Comments: N/A
- d) Are there appropriate details on the information sheet regarding the following (if applicable):
- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| • Purpose of the study | Yes / No / <u>N/A</u> |
| • Explanation of why participant has been chosen | Yes / No / <u>N/A</u> |
| • Details of materials/stimuli/qualitative topics | Yes / No / <u>N/A</u> |
| • Notification that materials used in the study are not diagnostic tools/therapy | Yes / No / <u>N/A</u> |
| • Notification that participation is voluntary | Yes / No / <u>N/A</u> |
| • Incentives/Compensation | Yes / No / <u>N/A</u> |
| • Informed consent | Yes / No / <u>N/A</u> |
| • Procedure | Yes / No / <u>N/A</u> |
| • Time commitment | Yes / No / <u>N/A</u> |

• Right to not answer questions	Yes / No / <u>N/A</u>
• Withdrawal	Yes / No / <u>N/A</u>
• How partially collected data will be used	Yes / No / <u>N/A</u>
• Benefits and risks of participating	Yes / No / <u>N/A</u>
• Anonymity	Yes / No / <u>N/A</u>
• Confidentiality	Yes / No / <u>N/A</u>
• Dissemination information	Yes / No / <u>N/A</u>

6. Dissemination (Qu15)

a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning research dissemination?
Yes / No Comments:

b) Are there appropriate details regarding any specific considerations about sharing the research?
Yes / No Comments:

7. Participant payments and inducements (Qu16)

a) Are there appropriate details regarding compensation arrangements?
Yes / No / N/A Comments:

8. Debrief (Qu17)

a) Are appropriate debrief details provided?
Yes / No / N/A Comments:

b) Are there appropriate details about how participants will be debriefed should they decide to withdraw from an online study?
Yes / No / N/A (not online study) Comments:

9. Data Security (Qu18)

a) Has the applicant provided appropriate details concerning data protection and storage?
Yes / No Comments: N/A

b) Have security issues been properly considered?
Yes / No Comments: N/A

c) Are there appropriate details regarding how privacy and confidentiality will be maintained during dissemination?
Yes / No Comments: N/A

10. Forum-based projects

a) Is the content of the website openly accessible?
Yes / No Comments: N/A

b) Has the applicant discussed what will happen with users who expressly state that they do not wish their responses to be used for research purposes?
Yes / No Comments: N/A

c) Has the applicant explained how online data collected will be anonymized?
Yes / No Comments: N/A

d) Has the applicant explained process of access, should the host website require posts to be posted through moderators

Yes / No	Comments: N/A
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e) Has the applicant detailed how, where appropriate, they will ensure that age limits are met?

Yes / No	Comments: N/A
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General comments: A straight forward qualitative thematic analysis of a published book. There are no ethical issues to consider

Review status (please highlight one of the following):

Chair's action
Staff/PGR for full review
UG/PGT for full review
Work with external agencies
Work with vulnerable participants
Other issues/concerns

NAME: J. Phillips

ROLE: Supervisor / Reviewer 1 / Reviewer 2

DATE: 30/04/18